

**For Immediate Release
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**Contact: K. Danielle Edwards
(615) 741-9192 (Office)
(615) 417-9097 (Cell)**

**DCS Partnership Seeks Resource Families On A "New Level"
Collaboration highlights need for adoptive and foster parents**

NASHVILLE, Tenn. - The Tennessee Department of Children's Services has partnered with two agencies in a collaboration that seeks to educate the public about the need for resource parents, commonly known as foster and adoptive parents, particularly for African-American youth, teenagers and special needs children in Middle Tennessee. DCS has teamed up with Family & Children's Service, an organization that specializes in finding permanent homes for special needs children in foster care, and New Level Caring Families, an initiative targeted at recruiting resource families for children in the Nashville area. New Level Caring Families is part of New Level Community Development Corporation, a community program established by Mt. Zion Baptist Church, under the leadership of Bishop Joseph Walker, III.

Resource parent is a new term for adoptive and foster parents that DCS is incorporating into its language and culture. Resource parents, whether they choose to foster or adopt, are an invaluable resource not only to the department, but also to the communities and children DCS serves. Resource parents may be single or married, with or without children of their own, employed or not employed (but able to meet his or her own financial needs), at least 18 years of age, and homeowners or renters. All resource parents must complete 30 hours of Parents as Tender Healers (PATH) training, undergo a background check, submit to a home study and supply references.

New Level Caring Families will be holding an informational meeting for prospective resource parents on Thursday, March 17, at 6:30 p.m. The meeting will be held at Mt. Zion Baptist Church, located at 1112 Jefferson Street in Nashville.

"This groundbreaking partnership shows a diligent effort on behalf of all involved agencies to secure loving, suitable homes for children in state custody," said Servella Terry, DCS director of recruitment, retention and support. "Moreover, it spotlights a significant need to find homes for both special needs youth and those who are overrepresented in the system, as African-American children are in Middle Tennessee. The need for older children in our care to be served also cannot be overstated."

As of January 31, 2005, there were 1,115 children in state custody in Davidson County. Of those, 674, or 60.5 percent, were between 13-18 years of age. For the same time period, 719, or 64.8 percent, of all children in state custody in Davidson County were African-American.

"Being a resource parent is no small feat," said Mattie Satterfield, director of foster care and adoptions. "Serving children in this way requires a level of commitment and selflessness that cannot be quantified."

The Tennessee Department of Children's Services was established in 1996 to provide the best possible care for children and youth who are in state custody, or at significant risk of entering custody, and their families. Services provided by DCS include child protective services, foster care, adoption, programs for delinquent youth, probation/aftercare, and treatment and rehabilitation programs for identified youth.

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